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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 6034
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 000854

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [XE](#) [CH](#) [TW](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINES' CHINESE SCHOOLS: A BATTLEGROUND FOR
PRC/TAIWAN RIVALRY

Classified By: Pol/C Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The People's Republic of China is playing an increasingly prominent role in promoting Chinese language/cultural education in the Philippines, primarily by engaging with Filipino-Chinese schools - historically pro-Taiwan institutions. Since 2003, the PRC has sent over 100 student-teachers to work at these schools, and another 150 student-teachers are expected to arrive in 2007. Of special note is a shift toward the PRC even by Chiang Kai Shek College. This academic rivalry is only one aspect of what many see as a zero sum competition. End Summary

Tsinoy

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¶2. (U) Depending on the source and the exact definition of Filipino-Chinese (popularly known as "Tsinoy") the Philippines has between 1 and 4 million Filipinos of Chinese descent. Although the community is known for having produced some extremely wealthy individuals or "taipans," including airline/whiskey mogul Lucio Tan and real estate giant Henry Sy, most Tsinoy are middle class.

¶3. (U) The Philippines has a long tradition of privately run Chinese schools that cater to this community, especially in Metro Manila, since the opening of the first in 1899. Today, there are 131 such schools nationwide, with approximately 100,000 students. In addition to offering the standard curriculum prescribed by the Philippine Department of Education, most also conduct two hours of Chinese classes daily, the maximum allowed by law.

¶4. (C) According to Michael Hsu, Deputy Director of the Political Affairs Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO), these schools historically looked for guidance and assistance to Taiwan, not the People's Republic of China (PRC). Other observers have noted that the Fujian origins of so many Tsinoy accounted for the pro-Taiwan sensibilities, as well as the Philippines' alliance with the U.S., especially strong during the Cold War era. .

PRC inroads

¶5. (SBU) The PRC government currently supports an intern "practicum" program under which PRC college students, primarily from Fujian Normal University and Quanzhou Normal University, travel to the Philippines to teach for one year at these schools. Since the inception of the program in

2003, the number of student-teachers in the Philippines has risen from 17 in the first year to 100 in 2006. An estimated 150 student-teachers will participate in 2007. School administrators have noted that these student-teachers are a particularly attractive option for many schools, especially in the rural provinces of the Philippines, because of their low cost. Some rural schools have as many as ten PRC student-teachers on their staffs. The Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry provides an additional \$100 monthly stipend for the student-teachers.

16. (C) A leading Jesuit school, Ateneo de Manila University, has since 2005 hosted a Confucius Institute in the Philippines with some support from the PRC. The Institute offers teacher training, language courses, cultural activities, and a resource center with Chinese language and Chinese studies materials. According to Ellen Palanca, Director of Ateneo's Chinese Studies Program, the Institute caters both to students and the general public and will accommodate the increased demand for Chinese language courses. The Institute offers courses in Mandarin using the simplified Chinese script. At present, the school employs one Chinese language teacher from the PRC, but expects to add another this year. Palanca explained that the Confucius Institute opened at a university, rather than at a high school, in order to maximize its impact with the broader public. Palanca commented that the PRC's educational outreach is a "natural" component of the PRC's more energetic foreign policy.

Test case: Chiang Kai Shek College

17. (C) According to TECO's Hsu, Chiang Kai Shek College, the largest "Chinese" school in the Philippines with

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thousands of students from grade one through college and the graduate level, is a good barometer of the PRC's successes in making inroads into traditional "allies of Taiwan." Traditionally, the school routinely sent students to study in Taiwan, used books provided by Taiwan, and coordinated with TECO over programs and assistance. Furthermore, the school still teaches using traditional characters, as found in Taiwan, although PRC DCM Deng Xijun told poloffs separately that he was still working hard to convince the school that knowledge of simplified characters would be of far more benefit to students in the world market and with modern computer software. According to Daniel Laogan, a prominent Filipino-Chinese attorney and a Chiang Kai Shek College graduate, the "unspoken secret" is that the school had received "hundreds of thousands of dollars" over the years from the Kuomintang Party.

18. (C) According to Hsu, the PRC Embassy since 2005 had cultivated an active relationship with the school. The Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines twice visited the school (the initial visit was the first by a PRC ambassador), and he has also now been the guest of honor at the opening ceremony of the College's annual basketball tournament. The College currently employs five teachers from the PRC. In 2007, it began organizing study-abroad programs with several PRC colleges, with the first batch of 15 students going for language training to Fujian Normal University as part of its undergraduate degree program in Chinese Language Education.

19. (C) Joan Sy-Cotio, the College's President, declined to comment on whether the school was shifting its focus to the PRC, but observed that the faculty, along with most of the Tsinoy community, desires "one China" and is "very much

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against Taiwan declaring independence." She characterized PRC engagement with her school as "aggressive," but insisted that "her friends at the Chinese Embassy" are not interested

in "pushing Taiwan out of the school." Laogan separately predicted that the school would nonetheless change its name in the "near future." He noted that this act, while symbolic, would mark the "end of Taiwan's domination" of the Chinese schools in the Philippines.

Comment

¶10. (C) The PRC/Taiwan rivalry in the Philippines is not limited to academic affairs, with similar jockeying going on in economic, business, commercial, and cultural sectors. Most, especially at TECO and the PRC Embassy, see this as a zero sum game, with much more at stake than symbolism or education.
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